

returned to Wilmington to work with the Freedmen's Bureau after the Civil War.³¹

The last group of Wilmington residents, the bottom rung on the socioeconomic ladder, was the enslaved population (or, postwar, called freedmen). In 1860, there were 7,103 slaves in New Hanover with 3,777 living inside the city.³² Many urban slaves, such as the nine men, women, and children who worked for the Bellamy family, were associated with households or were employed by their masters as artisans or in shipping operations.³³ The slaveholders with the largest concentrations of ownership in the city were the railroads, followed by those who owned steam mills and turpentine distilleries.³⁴ A large number of slaves

worked in maritime trades as pilots or boatmen ferrying people and supplies up and down the river.³⁵ A traveler to Wilmington in 1830 noted the large number of slaves on the waterfront waiting to transport freight between ships and the shore.³⁶

Wilmington's artisan slaves occupied a unique position among the slave workforce since they were able to learn a valuable trade and gain experience in business dealings and handling money. Some, such as brick mason Abraham Galloway, were able to broker their own lives because they were able to hire themselves out and keep the profits of their work as long as they paid their masters for the privilege. After slavery, such skills enabled artisans to establish financial footholds more easily than less skilled freedmen.³⁷

³¹ For more information on the lives of the Howes and other African American families, see Appendix A. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 460-461.

³² New Hanover was the third largest county in numbers of slaveholders in 1860, following top-ranked Wake and Granville Counties. Although it had one of the highest concentrations of slaveholders, New Hanover did not rank among the highest in concentrations of slaves. The counties in northeastern sections of the state held more slaves than did New Hanover by a wide margin. Historical Census Browser. Retrieved 1/6/2005, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center

³³ For a detailed analysis of the role of urban slaves in the Bellamy family, see Catherine Bishir, *The Bellamy Mansion, Wilmington, North Carolina: An Antebellum Architectural Treasure and Its People* (Raleigh: Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, 2004).

³⁴ In 1860, the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad owned 25 slaves outright and its officers and directors were among the larger slaveholders in the county. The slaves owned by the railroad were all males ranging in age from 21 to 45. Most enslaved railroad workers held unskilled positions, but some worked in higher-status positions such as mechanics, firemen, and brakemen. Other slaves held by businessmen worked in sawmills and turpentine distilleries. Of 74 Wilmington slaves whose occupation records as insured property have been revealed by modern insurance companies working in Illinois and California, most were categorized as

laborers. Review of both the names owner names and slave occupations shows that the primary occupation for insured slaves within this record group was working in either a saw mill or turpentine distillery. A small number were listed as domestic servants, and others were listed as artisan slaves, working as brick masons, carpenters, or boot and shoemakers. 1860 Census and Slave Schedules; Trelease, *North Carolina Railroad*, 62; "California Slavery Era Insurance Registry," <http://www.insurance.ca.gov/0100-consumers/0300-public-programs/0200-slavery-era-insur/> and Illinois Slavery Era Insurance Registries," <http://www.ins.state.il.us/Consumer/SlaveryReportin%20g.nsf/>.

³⁵ For informative discussions of the roles of maritime trades in antebellum slave life, see David Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*.

³⁶ David Cecelski, "The Shores of Freedom" *NCHR*, April 1994, 193-194.

³⁷ Analysis of the lives of several prominent African American Wilmington families reveals that many of their progenitors were skilled artisans before the Civil War. See Appendix A for biographies of the Sampson, Sadgwar, and Cutlar families. Additionally, recent study has indicated that many who were enslaved before the Civil War in maritime or urban environments had a better understanding of political and economic issues facing the state and nation than previously thought. Franklin, *Free Negro*